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ABSTRACT

Three federal initiatives--Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act--are working together to assist secondary schools in meeting current challenges. This pamphlet describes a two-volume book that presents a mix of research-based ideas and promising approaches to secondary schooling. The first volume describes a variety of promising practices and principles for reform supported by current research. Volume 2 illustrates how some secondary schools have successfully put to work the principles of good practice. The innovative efforts suggest ways in which new federal initiatives can together support secondary schools' efforts to raise their students' academic-achievement levels. The programs incorporate the following principles: (1) strengthening and enriching the secondary school curriculum; (2) adapting organizations to increase learning; (3) linking schooling to the future; (4) creating networks of support for students; and (5) providing resources for improvement. (LMI)

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ED 389 090

Raising the Educational Achievement of Secondary School Students

SUMMARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AN IDEA BOOK

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BACKGROUND

Secondary schools in the 1990s face unprecedented challenges. They must ensure that all students are provided with the opportunity to reach high levels of academic achievement, increase graduation rates, prepare students to become lifelong learners, and provide stimulating and substantively rigorous coursework. These expectations for high quality service and increased student performance are quite challenging, particularly for high poverty schools and for schools serving a student population with varying needs.

Three federal initiatives—Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act—are working together to assist secondary schools in meeting current challenges. Goals 2000, which provides many states with funds to develop comprehensive school reform plans, can help schools to serve all students. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act assists schools in creating a comprehensive and coherent system to help youth make a smooth transition from school to work, and link academic and practical activities. Title I, which previously played a minimal role in supporting overall school reform in serving disadvantaged secondary school students, is now designed both to meet the special needs of individual students in high poverty schools, as well as support entire schools in implementing innovative practices.

This two-volume idea book presents a mix of research-based ideas and promising approaches to secondary schooling to assist educators to address the challenges facing them and to take advantage of current opportunities. The first volume describes a variety of promising practices and principles for reform supported by current research. Volume two, *Profiles of Promising Practices,* illustrates how some secondary schools have successfully put to work principles of good practice. Title I can support efforts similar to those implemented in these schools.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Programs profiled in this idea book illustrate the importance of strengthening the quality of learning for all students. Successful practices include developing and implementing models of school-to-work activities, creating networks of support that assist students at risk of dropping out of school, and incorporating models of other resources for improvement, such as professional development for teachers and other school staff. The innovative efforts presented here suggest ways new federal initiatives such as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act can together support secondary schools' efforts to raise the academic achievement of their students.

These programs incorporate the following principles to improve academic outcomes for all secondary school students:

- **Strengthening and enriching the secondary school curriculum** engages students in academic work that they perceive as meaningful and motivating. The curriculum is restructured so that it reflects substantial depth, interdisciplinary learning, and has an academic and occupational focus. It incorporates and promotes activities such as internships, community service, and service learning. Related strategies focus

on increasing all students' access to a challenging curriculum by replacing traditional tracks with heterogenous grouping and providing integrated academic and vocational education.

Western Middle School in Louisville and its Alliance for Achievement partners *developed a new curriculum to teach algebra skills to all eighth graders using new math materials and manipulatives. Services in Title I schools can be similarly developed to enable Title I students to achieve the same high standards as other youth.*

• **Adapting organizations to increase learning.** To support innovations in teaching and learning, successful secondary schools often develop new organizational arrangements. Programs in these schools have used two particularly effective practices: creating communities of learners on a scale that is manageable and restructuring uses of time.

At the Thurgood Marshall Middle School in Lynn, Massachusetts, *teachers cluster students in groups that include bilingual and special education students.*

Tuba High School in Arizona *has adapted models of schools-within-schools to integrate learning around a specific academic or occupational focus. The flexibility Title I lends to these schools supports the innovative practices critical to raising the academic achievement of all students.*

• **Linking schooling to the future.** Successful schools help students connect academic success to future opportunity. Reforms call for students to graduate as skilled learners, able to continue their education in college, technical school, or work-based programs and to acquire the skills they need to achieve their goals. Tech Prep, youth apprenticeships, career academies, and college prep programs and supports are examples of strategies used to promote students' future success.

Title I, which previously played a minimal role in supporting overall school reform in serving disadvantaged secondary school students, is now designed to support entire schools in implementing innovative practices.

Several good programs center around the development of school-to-work activities. The career academy model at ***Socorro High School for the Health Professions in Texas*** *allows students to access a health-related curriculum and work-based learning that will prepare them for high-skilled jobs in the health professions.*

• **Creating networks of support for students** that address students' academic and personal needs can enable at-risk secondary students to persist and succeed in school. Successful schools in this idea book experiment with various interventions to support students: an increase in personal and responsive advising systems; mentoring programs; programs that create partnerships between parents, families, and schools; programs that promote safe and disciplined environments; and comprehensive service networks that reach within and beyond the school.

ESEA highlights the need for schools to provide coordinated services by encouraging the development of networks of support. The Cities in Schools Program at ***West Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, North Carolina,*** *targets students who have been identified during elementary or middle school as at risk of dropping out because of abuse (substance, physical, or sexual) or family problems.*

Projects sponsored by the ***Ounce of Prevention Fund in Illinois*** *provides after-school and summer clubs that offer youth opportunities for recreation and community service, creating alternatives to gangs while promoting pride and self-esteem and enhancing group cohesiveness.*

• **Resources for improvement,** such as staff development that introduces new methods and materials, promotes peer collaboration, grounds teachers in principles of reform, and fosters the sharing of responsibility and authority among teachers. Effective secondary schools use many resources to nurture and sustain the growth of their faculty and institution. Planning activities that engage teachers in decision-making and problem-solving early and often contribute to staff commitment, which real change requires.

Successful efforts to raise the educational achievements of at-risk secondary school students touch all facets of school life.

At Tuba City High School in Arizona *and the* ***Grizzly High School in North San Juan, California,*** *teachers attend retreats to develop school goals and identify ways to achieve them. Technical assistance and training resources funded under the ESEA will be available to assist schools in carrying out their plans for reform.*

Alternative Middle Years at James Martin School in Philadelphia *promotes staff development by supporting teachers' attendance at full-day conferences and in short-term projects conducted at the school.*

These practices have created an atmosphere and working environment that supports effective academic activities at these institutions. Funding also plays a necessary and significant role in school reform. Project implementers profiled in this idea book reported that supplemental funds were central to their success. Resources provide the extra support required for initiating new programs and practices.

OTHER IDEA BOOKS PRODUCED AND PLANNED

- Implementing Schoolwide Projects
- Extending Learning Time for Disadvantaged Students
- Roles for Educational Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools
- Using Technology for Learning
- Services to Migrant Children

Copies of Raising the Educational Achievement of Secondary Schools Students: An Idea Book are available by writing the Planning and Evaluation Service, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue S.W., Room 4162, Washington, DC 20202, or by calling (202) 401-0590.

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